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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [SR](#)

SUBJECT: TFLE01: Serbia's Response to the Lebanon Crisis

¶1. (sbu) President Tadic issued an official statement supporting an "immediate and sustainable end" to hostilities. The government of PM Kostunica has so far declined to take an official position on the Lebanon crisis.

¶2. (sbu) Belgrade daily Kurir reported a statement by Rasim Ljajic, leader of the Democratic Party of the Sandzak, criticizing the GOS for keeping silent on Israel's attacks on civilians in Lebanon, saying it is "a fight against Muslims" rather than against terrorism. Ljajic told us privately he had both "humanitarian and political" reasons for issuing his statement. Politically, he said he must be sensitive to his constituents, who are mainly Muslims sympathetic to the civilians in Lebanon [Note: local elections in his muslim-majority home district will be held in September. End note.] Also, he said he personally fears the situation there could contribute to the radicalization of Islam (even in Muslim parts of Serbia), and that it has the potential to create more terrorists.

¶3. (u) Kurir also ran an article on key parties' positions on the crisis, noting that the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) condemned the actions of Israel, comparing Lebanon to Serbia in 1999 under the NATO bombings. A spokesman for G-17+ said the international community should work for an immediate cease-fire and settlement of the conflict, while the DS spokesman said he understands both sides, and that the USG finds itself "between a rock and a hard place." DSS made no public statement.

¶4. (sbu) MoD contacts told us recently that they might be interested in contributing to a UN-led PKO/stabilization force, but could not commit to any specific contribution (past PKO contributions have been of the medical team variety, and a similar unit is currently being readied for potential participation in other regions). Serbian acting CHOD Ponos also expressed interest. President Tadic's foreign affairs advisor, Vuk Jeremic, told us that while he was open to the idea, it was premature. Jeremic said he would raise it with Tadic.

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